

## **VIRGINIA CROSS BIO**

Virginia Cross was born into poverty on the Muckleshoot Indian Reservation in 1939. She shared a bed with four sisters, was in charge of fetching water from a nearby stream, and did migrant work with her family during the summer.

She loved learning and realized at an early age the importance of education in moving her people forward. She became one of her tribe's first college grads, earning a Master's Degree in Education from the University of Washington, went on to become Muckleshoot's first Head Start Director in the 1960's, and then the Auburn School District's first Indian Education Coordinator.

Virginia's career in tribal government is without parallel. She is in her 40th year as an elected member of the 9-member Muckleshoot Tribal Council, serving as Tribal Chairman for a record 19 of those years.

Believing that education is the key to the future, she has focused on it throughout her career, and during her tenure the Muckleshoot Tribe has gone from being literally the poorest of the poor to a vibrant, well-educated cosmopolitan community. For many years, Virginia was one of just four college graduates in the tribe, and now there are literally hundreds.

As Coast Salish people throughout the greater Pacific Northwest say, "We raise our hands to you, Virginia Cross."